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FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

IN CHARGE OF

LAVINIA L. DOCK

REPORT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES ON NURSING IN FRANCE*

By MLLE. DR. ANNA HAMILTON

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For the last forty years French hospitals have been, as a rule, conducted by religious orders devoid of all training, and also generally of instruction and education.

Gradually the rules of narrow-minded modesty and strict church attendance obliged these orders to engage rough male and female servants to do what nursing work the nuns were prevented from doing in the wards.

Even as early as 1788 we see in a report drawn up for the King of France by the great Dr. Cenon on the state of the big Hôtel-Dieu of Paris that there were one hundred and two *nuns* in that hospital and three hundred and seven *ward-helpers*, besides two hundred and twenty-eight other hospital employés!

The want of proper training rendered nursing a most unpleasant work, the absence of education developed coarseness in it, and ignorance stopped its progress; thus nursing, left in the hands of those common, ignorant helpers, could not be otherwise than looked down upon by all in France. It was supposed, and ever since believed, that *nuns* only, beings of a special nature, could possibly live in the hospitals without losing their morals.

When reform sprung up in Protestant countries it was not taken into consideration by the religious bodies, who ruled the hospitals through the nuns, and these last, kept aloof from all that goes on in the world, went on exactly in their work as they were wont to do ages ago.

Private hospitals are very rare in France; they are all *civil* hospitals, ruled over by the (*a*) Commission Administrative des Hôpitaux, whose members are elected half by the Municipal Council and the other half named by the Préfect. As chance and politics will have it, they may be a most ignorant set of men. (*b*) The Municipal Council, which allows the necessary money from the town taxes, the mayor of the town being always president of the hospitals. (*c*) The Assistance Publique of France, which sends inspectors, and whose approval must be asked for heavy loans or purchases or plans of new hospitals. This last depends on the Ministry of Interior.

In the hospital we have a *director* (man), who lives in the hospital and is responsible for everything (except the nuns). He usually is a man without much education and with very little medical or hospital experience. I knew a former naval captain take that place, and in another instance a former gendarme was

* Report sent to the International Council of Nurses meeting in Buffalo, September, 1901.

entrusted with that post! He usually is a fonctionnaire who has friends at court and is eager to secure a post where he may make money *in many ways.*

In hospitals worked by nuns we find *two masters,* the director and the superior (head of the nuns), who usually are at daggers drawn all the year round. *She* alone has authority over the nuns, *she* alone can reprove them, change them from one ward to another, or can exact obedience from them on any point whatever. *He* rules it over the lay employés, who work under the nuns' orders in the wards, engages and dismisses them, and this very awkward state of things brings on constant friction in the hospital staff.

Doctors form a third party, with no authority, though they are supposed to be sole masters of their wards. Obnoxious nuns who disobeyed their orders, neglected the patients, and scoffed at them have been known to remain more than seven years in the same wards in spite of all the doctors' demand for their removal.

I. (*a*) The curriculum of training for nuns consists of religious instruction during the novitiate, which lasts from six to twelve months, the probationer remaining in a convent. She is then sent in a school, asylum, charitable work of any kind, or in a hospital, just as the superior of the order may wish, the opinion or desire of the novice not being taken into consideration. If she is sent in a hospital, she works with the older nuns, and after some time will be given a ward to superintend. I have known cases when nuns being short, a new one was immediately turned into ward-sister with thirty patients to be responsible for, and not the smallest hospital experience.

(*b*) There is no technical instruction on the subject.

II. (*a*) There exist three hundred and thirty-nine orders of nuns who take up nursing, and may also be contemplative or instructive orders besides. Of these eighty-one only restrict themselves to nursing, and forty-eight of them ought to work solely in hospitals, but actually there are only five of them still in attendance in hospitals.

(*b*) The constitution and regulation of monastic orders vary from one to another, but we find that hospital nuns, as a rule, are not allowed to do night-work, to give any nursing help to male patients or little boys, to attend women in child-labor, or to nurse syphilitic women.

They must *all* take their meals at the same time and also attend prayer together.

They wear woollen dresses and long and wide sleeves, which they are not allowed to tuck up, as showing their arms bare would be immodest.

They are not allowed to give vaginal douches or enemas, or to be present at men's operations or gynæcological ones.

Their lay-helpers, ignorant and worse, and the medical students do what proper nurses would accomplish ever so much better, being refined and womanly.

We have in France two other religious communities, who do not consent to be called *monastic,* but are very near to it.

1. The Hospital Sisters of Lyons (founded in the seventh century) are unique in France. They were formerly women of loose morals, who repented and remained in the hospitals for the rest of their life.

It was only in 1690 that they began to be called *sisters* instead of *servants* of the hospitals. They have never been allowed to take vows of any kind by the hospital authorities and proprietors, for the general rule of hospital organization has an exception in Lyons, where it is quite peculiar to the town. The hospitals are very wealthy, but dreadfully old-fashioned.

These sisters have no superiors, only a chaplain and confessor in each hospital. They are taken mostly from the peasant class, and are taught elementary knowledge at the hospital. Some of them are allowed to work for the midwife certificate, a most remarkable fact.

The novitiate lasts one year; then for ten or fifteen years the nun becomes a pretendant sister, earning eighty francs a year and providing her own clothes. Afterwards she gets only forty francs, but is adopted by the hospital council, which promises to clothe and feed and take care of her to the end of her life. But at any time one of these peculiar nuns can leave and marry if she likes to do so.

However liberal these nuns may be, the hospital wards show the want of training and common knowledge in these women, for dirt, neglect, and disobedience to the doctor's orders abound there, as in other hospitals nursed by religious communities.

2. The Institution of Deaconesses of Paris (founded 1841) possessed only eighty-five sisters in 1878. These sisters aim at all kinds of good work, doing nursing as well, but without any special training towards it. Novices learn cooking, washing, etc. They do not take up night-work in hospitals, and take in lay helps (quite ignorant) for that. If they are called upon to do night-work, they do not expect to be allowed to rest next day. No examinations are passed, and these sisters mostly come from the servant class.

In 1877 the Municipal Council of Paris, wishing the hospitals to be properly attended and the patients cleverly nursed, decided to open schools for nurses (of both sexes), and to gradually replace the nuns by lay nurses in the civil hospitals of the towns.

But this assembly of *men*, though clever enough and lovers of progress, did not understand at all the requisites to get proper training for nurses. Lectures were begun, given by clever doctors, who spoke on medical subjects, *not nursing*, and anyone, even devoid of elementary instruction, was allowed to attend. A class for teaching reading and writing was opened for those who wanted to learn just enough to be able to write the examination papers! They mostly were men and women working all day long in the hospitals, not only in the wards, but even in the post-mortem rooms or stables, linenry, washhouse, etc., etc.

There was no link between the hospital ward work and the school. The diploma of nursing might be obtained after eight-months' attendance at the lectures and successful examination-papers, which might be tried for over and over again. In one case a male nurse attempted the examinations every year for nine years before getting the diploma, though these papers were written at any time the candidate wished to and without much guarantee of honest personal work.

The hospitals did not make a rule of engaging only nurses who had the diploma or wished to work for it, and the diploma holders, being mostly devoid of education, did not get the best posts. No practical training was given in the wards, and the actual state of the Paris hospitals prove it at one glance.

The personnel is so very unsteady that we find in the year 1898 that there were fourteen dismissals in the hospitals of Salpêtrierê, Bicêtre, Pitié, and Lariboisierê of male and female nurses for drunkenness, disobedience, neglect, idleness, misconduct, etc., etc. This shows what a poor result the nursing schools opened more than twenty years before had given.

The nurses are allowed to marry, and we find cases of man and wife, both

nurses, sleeping in dormitories! When there are children the case is still worse, and ward work is more than ever neglected.*

This attempt made in Paris in the hope of getting a properly trained staff led to two results: (*a*) a few other French towns (eight to ten at most) followed the same plan with unsatisfactory results; (*b*) the others decided to uphold the nun system rather than have those lay-nurses whose loose morals are too well known.

A nursing-school for girls only exists since 1889 at the Protestant House of Health at Bordeaux. But the probationers were not provided with proper accommodation, did not care to stay on, and the nursing-staff was more like a set of servants, and there was no training given besides the theoretical lectures.

In May, 1901, the management of this school of nurses was given over to me, and it is being set on a proper footing for lady probationers, and has properly trained nurses to instruct them.

Free and paying probationers are received for two-years' training. Lectures are given by doctors and examinations passed before professors of the medical faculty. The hospital holds sixty-eight beds for men, women, and children, and an important out-patient and accident department.

In Paris a nursing-school was opened in 1899 for girls of good education. It is under the care of the Society for Helping the Sick. The probationers are sent to the Paris hospitals at the time the visiting doctors go round. That is all the hospital training they get! Girls have to engage themselves for eight years, of which two are spent in training (?) and the other six in attending paying patients in private houses.

There are in France a great many so-called nursing lectures organized by Red Cross Societies, which are attended by fashionable ladies who never go in for any kind of practical training, and only attend hospitals at the time the visiting doctors go their round.

They very often go through theoretical examinations, hold diplomas and medals, notwithstanding their want of experience in real nurses' work, and, moreover, all expect to hold the most important posts in future ambulancies!

The Superior Council of Assistance Publique of France took into consideration the want of proper nursing staffs in all French hospitals in 1898. Several men doctors were asked to draw up a programme of studies for nurses. This lengthy programme has been published, and shows the utter ignorance of these medical men of what the training of a nurse should be.

Notwithstanding, the council, with its high authority, published a paper asking all the hospitals of France to instruct their nursing-staff after this programme. Until now (August, 1901) only one town has responded to this appeal. A great many town authorities have taken up the subject, for everywhere dissatisfaction is felt at the actually deplorable state of French hospitals.

*On entering the Paris hospitals a would-be nurse has to work three years as probationer, five years as nurse, two years as staff nurse, two years as under-ward surveyor, two years as ward surveyor. If numerous punishments have been inflicted, more years are added to the above. But it is not a rule even for those who have been more than fourteen years in service to hold the good posts! They are given to outsiders!

THE TRAINING OF NURSES IN THE WILHELMINA HOSPITAL, AMSTERDAM, HOLLAND*

BY MEJ. L. KRUYSSE
Matron

THE training of probationers and nurses consists of a three-years' course.

The following course of lectures is given:

First Year.—Anatomy, surgical nursing, bandaging, first help in emergency cases and transport of patients. Lectures on general nursing and nursing ethics.

Second Year.—Elementary physiology, medical and fever nursing. Continuation of lectures on general nursing and nursing ethics.

Third Year.—Lectures on foods and principles of hygiene. Repetition classes for examination.

At the completion of the three-years' course, after the certificate for general nursing has been earned, the nurses get a course of sick-room cookery, and they can also obtain certificates for monthly and mental nursing, as lectures on those subjects are given afterwards.

The probationers have no preliminary training, but everything is taught them in the wards without having any responsibility. They enter the hospital on a month's trial.

Women of every class and denomination are accepted as probationers when they prove to be of good character and devoted to the sick, and if they are sufficiently educated.

HOURS AND MEALS.

Nurses and probationers come on duty at six-thirty A.M. and remain till seven or eight P.M. Breakfast is served from seven-forty-five to eight-fifteen and from eight-thirty to nine. Nurses have a preliminary breakfast in the ward kitchens. Fifteen minutes are given for lunch from eleven to eleven-thirty. Dinner from one to two and from two-fifteen to four-fifteen. Supper at seven P.M. and at eight-fifteen. Nurses and probationers are on duty altogether eleven hours per day. Every three months they are one month on night duty. Every week alternately they have the evening off or the whole day.

They are allowed to sleep out, and they have late leave occasionally to attend the theatre or some concert. They have three-weeks' holiday. The head nurses come on duty at eight-thirty A.M. and remain till eight P.M. Between eight and ten P.M. they must be in call and superintend their wards occasionally. They have the evening and whole day off every week alternately and four-weeks' holiday.

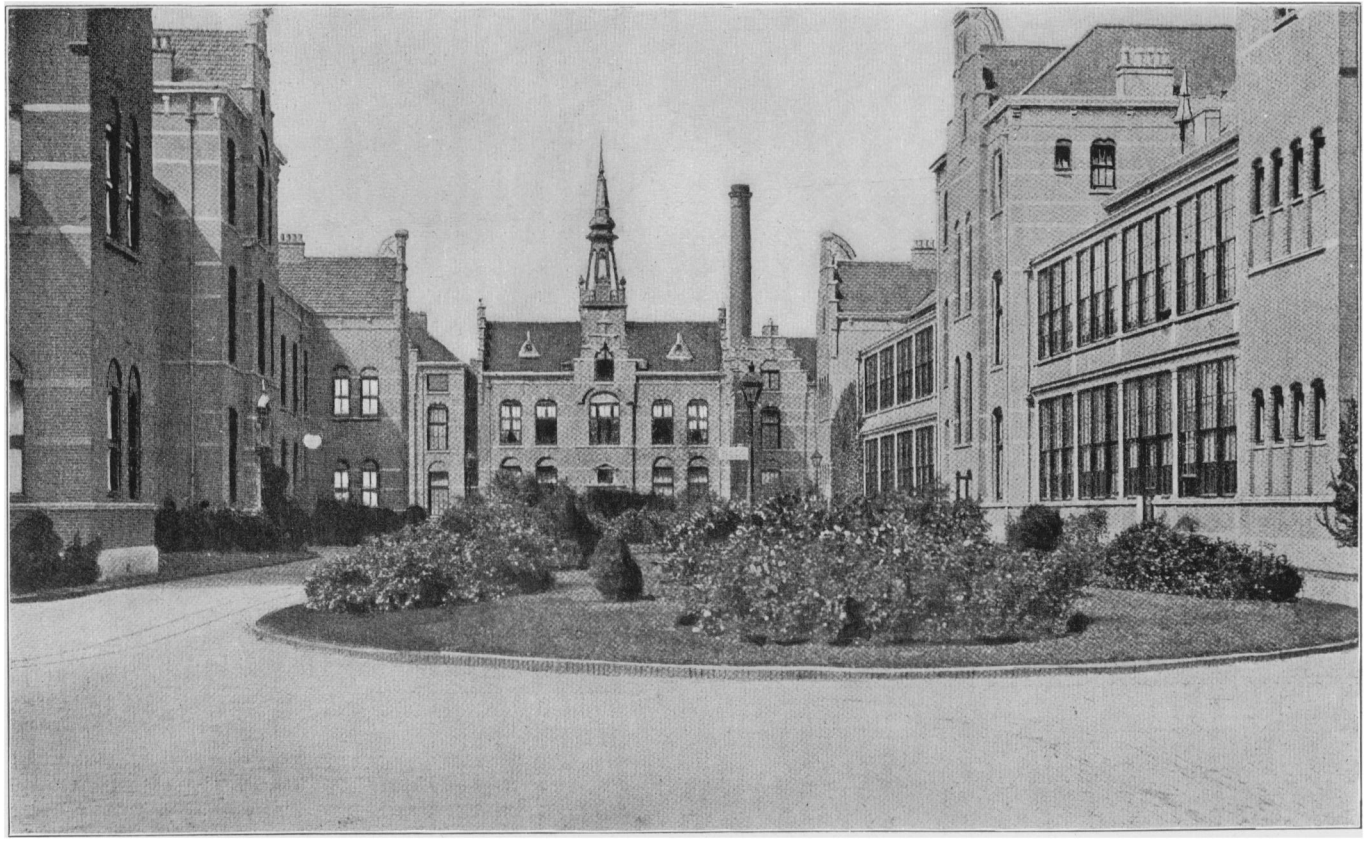
SALARIES.

Probationers receive during the first one and half years eight pounds and afterwards sixteen and two-thirds pounds, besides board and washing. Certificated nurses receive twenty and five-sixths pounds and assistant head nurses twenty-five pounds. Head nurses begin with thirty-three and a half pounds and go up to fifty pounds in time.

HOSPITAL ECONOMY.

Special attention is paid to this most important question. Not only is quality and quantity of food seen to, but also linen, dressings, instruments, nursing articles, etc., in order to have as little waste as possible.

* Report sent to the International Council of Nurses meeting in Buffalo.



THE WILHELMINA HOSPITAL, AMSTERDAM

Different articles are purchased by contract, but the contracts are not always granted to the lowest bidders.

THE WILHELMINA HOSPITAL

is comparatively new. It replaced the old "Buiten Gasthuis," which was no longer fit for use. The foundation-stone was laid May 28, 1891, by Queen Wilhelmina, when she was eleven years of age. The hospital has been in use since 1893. It is a municipal hospital, supported by the rents of the municipality.

The patients did not pay as a rule, but since January, 1901, they pay, if possible, a small fee, according to their income.

The board is chosen out of the municipal Poor Law Board and is subject to that body.

A HOTEL FOR NURSES IN LONDON

[We think American nurses, intending to travel abroad, will be glad to know of an English hotel for nurses only.—Ed.]

The Nurses' Hostel, Francis Street, W., was founded by Miss Catherine Wood in 1889; it was started first as a private venture in a house in Percy Street, then overflowed into a second house, and when these leases expired it was formed into a limited liability company, of which the shareholders are mostly nurses. We believe we are right in saying that this is the first public company promoted by a woman and worked and financed by women. It has paid a steadily increasing dividend from the time of issuing the shares, and as we go to press we are told of a second block being built to meet the ever-increasing demand on accommodation.

The hostel is a hotel for nurses engaged in the active practice of their profession, and is worked on the lines of a hotel; that is, nurses are free to come without previous notice, the only condition being that they must be nurses. The managing director (Miss Wood) has the power to refuse to admit any nurse who in her opinion would not be a desirable inmate, or to refuse re-admittance to any who have shown themselves to be objectionable when in the house. Needless to say, such powers are used with discretion and have been seldom exercised. The hostel is not a nursing institution under another name; those nurses who live in it are supposed to have their own connection, or to be working one up; but being on the telephone, many doctors recommend their nurses to make it their head-quarters, and a certain amount of casual work is bound to find its way to a nurses' centre. Still, no register is kept, nor is commission charged on any work obtained through the house.

The hostel has been specially built for its work; there are cubicles and separate bedrooms, common sitting- and dining-rooms, library, extensive box-rooms, baths, and other conveniences. The present building will accommodate over fifty nurses; a second is being built to hold fifty more. In this block it is intended to have small separate bedrooms, with a few double bedrooms for friends or sisters. The rooms in the new block may be rented and retained by nurses who can put in their own furniture, thus combining the advantages of a private lodging with the more sociable life of the hostel.

Nurses are not required to pay any yearly subscription or entrance fee: they pay for what they have; then when called off (except those who rent a room permanently), they clear up their possessions and incur no further expense until

they return to the hostel, when they are again accommodated with board and lodging. The nurses find that this method secures for them an appreciable saving on their earnings, as they only pay when they are in, except for storage of box or renting of cupboard, and when they are away their letters are forwarded, and any other business transacted in their absence; the hostel thus becomes their permanent address, which is of so much importance to nurses.

About five hundred or more nurses are regular guests of the hostel; besides, there is a large number who make use of it when visiting London for any purpose; they come from all parts of the empire, and it is an interesting circumstance that the first nurse to make use of the hostel in Percy Street was a nurse from South Africa home on furlough, and now Colonial, Indian, or foreign nurses are frequently to be seen in its rooms.

(Reprinted from *Nursing Notes*, an English nursing journal, the organ of the "Trained Nurses' Club" and other associations.)

FROM *The Nursing Record* of October 5 we reprint the list of English nursing sisters upon whom the King has been pleased to confer the decoration of the Royal Red Cross in recognition of their services during the South African War:

ARMY NURSING SERVICE.

Superintendent Miss Martha Thomas, Superintendent Miss Sidney Jane Browne, Superintendent Miss Elizabeth Anne Dowse, Superintendent Miss Sarah Emily Webb, Superintendent Miss Sarah Elizabeth Oram, Superintendent Miss Ann Garriock, Nursing Sister and Acting Superintendent Miss Louisa Watson Tulloh, Nursing Sister and Acting Superintendent Miss Louisa Mary Stewart, Nursing Sister Miss Elizabeth Treacher Noble, Nursing Sister Miss Alice Sweeting Bond, Nursing Sister Miss Jane Hoadley, Nursing Sister Miss Mary Grenfell Hill.

ARMY NURSING SERVICE RESERVE.

Nursing Sister Miss Jane Elizabeth Skillman, Nursing Sister Miss Annie Beadsmore Smith, Nursing Sister Miss Annie Blanche Trew, Nursing Sister Miss Ethel Hope Beecher, Nursing Sister Miss Amy Knaggs, Nursing Sister Miss Jessie Southwell, Nursing Sister Miss Edith McCall Anderson, Nursing Sister Miss Emma Maud McCarthy, Nursing Sister Miss Mary Elizabeth Greenham.

IRISH HOSPITAL.—Miss Annie Maude McDonnell.

YEOMANRY HOSPITAL.—Miss Catherine Emelia Nisbet, Miss Mary C. Fisher.

WELSH HOSPITAL.—Miss Marion Lloyd.

PRINCESS CHRISTIAN'S HOSPITAL.—Miss Eleanor Constance Lawrence.

EDINBURGH HOSPITAL.—Miss Annie Warren Gill.

PORTLAND NATIONAL HOSPITAL.—Miss Edith Pretty.

LADYBRAND.—Miss Julia Underwood.

LADYSMITH.—Mrs. Eugênie Ludlow.

MAFEKING.—Mother Superior Teresa, Miss Hill, Miss Crauford.

NEW SOUTH WALES.—Miss E. Nixon.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.—Miss A. Bidsmead.

NEW ZEALAND.—Miss J. M. N. Williamson.

The report of the Committee on the Reorganization of the English Army and Indian Nursing Service will be given in the December number.